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021432Z May 01

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 001492

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SUBJECT: AN UPDATE ON ZIMBABWE'S "FAST-TRACK" LAND
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PROGRAM

REF: HARARE 1276

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D' AFFAIRES EARL M. IRVING FOR
REASONS 1.5 (B/D).

SUMMARY

[11.](#) (C) THE QUIET ATTEMPT BY THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS UNION (CFU) TO RE-ENGAGE WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE (GOZ) ON LAND REFORM (REFTEL) HAS REACHED AN IMPASSE. THE GOZ IS INSISTING AS A PRECONDITION FOR FURTHER TALKS THAT THE CFU WITHDRAW ITS LAWSUIT CHALLENGING THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF "FAST-TRACK", EVEN THOUGH THE SUPREME COURT HAS ALREADY RULED IN FAVOR OF THE CFU. AT THE SAME TIME, THE GOZ, WITH THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE AIR FORCE, ARMY, POLICE AND THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION (CIO), HAS BEGUN A NEW PUSH TO QUICKLY GET ADDITIONAL SQUATTERS ONTO COMMERCIAL FARMS NATIONWIDE. ON APRIL 25, THE GOZ-CONTROLLED "THE HERALD" NEWSPAPER REPORTED THAT THE GOZ PLANS TO SUBMIT A BILL TO PARLIAMENT THAT WILL LEGALIZE THE STATUS OF FARM INVADERS AND PREVENT THEIR EVICTION UNTIL THE GOZ IS ABLE TO RESETTLE THEM. LARGE-SCALE WHITE COMMERCIAL FARMERS, WHO GROW MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF ZIMBABWE'S WHEAT CROP, HAVE NOT RECEIVED GUARANTEES FROM THE GOZ THAT THEY WILL BE ALLOWED TO HARVEST IF THEY PLANT AND THEREFORE HAVE DELAYED PLANTING A CROP. CONTRARY TO
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PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE GOZ THAT IT HAS BEGUN PAYING FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LAND ON ACQUIRED FARMS, THE CFU AND INDIVIDUAL FARMERS WE HAVE SPOKEN TO INSIST THAT TO DATE THEY HAVE RECEIVED NO PAYMENTS. A VISIT TO TWO FARMS IN A DISTRICT SOUTHWEST OF HARARE INDICATES THAT THE GOZ IS PROVIDING LITTLE OR NO ASSISTANCE TO THE RESETTLED FARMERS. END SUMMARY.

CFU - GOZ QUIET TALKS ON LAND REFORM DEADLOCKED

[12.](#) (C) ON APRIL 27, ECONOFF SPOKE WITH TIM HENWOOD (PROTECT), PRESIDENT OF THE CFU, AT THE ZIMBABWE INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR IN BULAWAYO. HENWOOD SAID THAT THE QUIET TALKS INITIATED BY THE CFU WITH THE GOZ TO TRY AND FIND A WAY FORWARD ON LAND REFORM HAVE REACHED AN IMPASSE. THE GOZ IS INSISTING THAT THE CFU MUST WITHDRAW ITS LITIGATION AGAINST THE GOZ OVER THE "FAST-TRACK" RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM BEFORE THE GOZ WILL TALK

FURTHER WITH THE CFU. THE CFU NEGOTIATING TEAM WAS TOLD BY GOZ OFFICIALS THAT THE LAWSUIT, AND THE SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENT IN THE CFU'S FAVOR ON THE SUIT, IS VERY EMBARRASSING TO PRESIDENT MUGABE. HOWEVER, HENWOOD SAID THAT THE CFU CANNOT WITHDRAW A LAWSUIT UPON WHICH A COURT HAS ALREADY RENDERED JUDGEMENT.

A NEW GOZ PUSH TO GET MORE SQUATTERS ON FARMS

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13. (C) ON APRIL 12 ECONOFF SPOKE WITH TIM EVANS (PROTECT), THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CFU MWENEZI DISTRICT FARMERS ASSOCIATION. (NOTE: MWENEZI IS LOCATED IN SOUTHERN ZIMBABWE NEAR THE BORDER WITH SOUTH AFRICA. END NOTE.) EVANS STATED THAT THREE TEAMS FROM THE GOZ NATIONAL LAND TASK FORCE (NLTF) HAD RECENTLY VISITED OCCUPIED FARMS IN MWENEZI AND TWO NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS. THE MWENEZI DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR (DA), WHO IS ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS, TOLD EVANS THAT THE THREE TEAMS WERE HEADED UP BY ZIMBABWE AIR FORCE VICE MARSHALL MUCHENA, ZIMBABWE NATIONAL ARMY MAJOR GENERAL NYAMBUZA, AND ZIMBABWE REPUBLIC POLICE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF CRIME MUTANGA. CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION AGENTS WERE ALSO TEAM MEMBERS. ACCORDING TO THE DA, THE PURPOSE OF THE NLTF TEAMS VISITS WAS TO GO TO OCCUPIED FARMS AND TELL THE INVADERS THAT THEY HAD TO STAY ON THE FARMS, AND THAT THEY NEEDED TO FIND ADDITIONAL PEOPLE TO INVADE FARMS. ACCORDING TO THE DA, THIS IS PART OF THE GOZ'S EFFORT TO GET ANOTHER 2,500 INVADERS ONTO COMMERCIAL FARMS IN EACH OF ZIMBABWE'S TEN PROVINCES -- FOR A TOTAL OF 25,000 NEW INVADERS NATIONWIDE -- BY JUNE. EVANS STATED THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE OCCUPIED FARMS IN MWENEZI AND THE TWO NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS HAVE NOT BEEN LISTED FOR COMPULSORY ACQUISITION BY THE GOZ. HE ADDED THAT IT WAS

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R 021432Z MAY 01
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COMPLETELY ILLOGICAL THAT THE GOZ WAS ENCOURAGING FARM INVASIONS AND RESETTLEMENT IN THIS REGION, SINCE MWENEZI AND THE OTHER TWO DISTRICTS ARE LOCATED IN AN EXTREMELY DROUGHT-PRONE REGION IN WHICH THE MAJORITY OF COMMERCIAL FARMERS ARE LARGE-SCALE CATTLE RANCHERS OR INVOLVED IN WILDLIFE RANCHING AND GAME PARK OPERATIONS. TIM HENWOOD TOLD ECONOFF THAT SIMILAR NLTF TEAMS HAVE BEEN VISITING FARMS IN ALL TEN OF ZIMBABWE'S PROVINCES OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS.

A GOZ BILL TO LEGALIZE THE FARM INVADERS

14. (C) ON APRIL 25, THE GOZ-CONTROLLED "THE HERALD"

NEWSPAPER REPORTED THAT THE GOZ IS GOING TO SUBMIT A BILL TO PARLIAMENT THAT WILL LEGALIZE THE STATUS OF ILLEGAL OCCUPIERS ON COMMERCIAL FARMS. THE BILL WILL NULLIFY SUPREME COURT AND HIGH COURT RULINGS REQUIRING THAT ILLEGAL OCCUPIERS BE IMMEDIATELY EVICTED FROM COMMERCIAL FARMS AND OTHER OCCUPIED LANDS. THE BILL INCLUDES SPECIFIC PROVISIONS REGARDING WHEN INDIVIDUALS MUST HAVE OCCUPIED FARMS, AND ENTITLES THEM TO LEGAL PROTECTION FROM EVICTION FOR SPECIFIC PERIODS UNTIL THE GOZ IS ABLE TO RESETTLE THEM. THE BILL GIVES PRESIDENT MUGABE, ALL CABINET MINISTERS, AND ANY OTHER INDIVIDUALS DESIGNATED BY THE PRESIDENT, AUTHORITY TO CERTIFY ANY FARM INVADERS AS "PROTECTED PERSONS" WHO CANNOT BE EVICTED FROM THE FARMS THEY OCCUPY. (COMMENT: RECENT
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GOZ PRACTICE INDICATES THAT THE RULING PARTY WILL FAST-TRACK THE BILL THROUGH PARLIAMENT, WITH LITTLE OR NO DEBATE AND NO AMENDMENTS, AND ITS LEGAL PROVISIONS WILL THEN BE INTERPRETED LIBERALLY BY THE GOZ. END COMMENT.)

COMMERCIAL FARMERS NOT PLANTING WHEAT

15. (C) AS OF APRIL 27, COMMERCIAL FARMERS WHO NORMALLY GROW OVER EIGHTY PERCENT OF ZIMBABWE'S WHEAT AND PLANT AT THE END OF APRIL, HAD NOT BEGUN PLANTING THIS YEAR'S CROP. CFU PRESIDENT HENWOOD TOLD ECONOFF THAT THE FARMERS HAD STILL NOT RECEIVED ANY GUARANTEE FROM THE GOZ THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO HARVEST A WHEAT CROP IF PLANTED. WITHOUT SUCH A GUARANTEE, ZIMBABWE'S BANKS WILL NOT LOAN MONEY FOR WHEAT PLANTING, AND THE FARMERS THEMSELVES WILL NOT RISK THEIR PERSONAL CAPITAL ON PLANTING A CROP THEY MAY NOT BE ALLOWED TO HARVEST AND SELL. IN ADDITION, HENWOOD SAID THAT MOST OF ZIMBABWE'S LARGEST WHEAT GROWERS ARE IN THE THREE MASHONALAND PROVINCES, WHERE WAR VETS HAVE RECENTLY BECOME MORE AGGRESSIVE IN INTERFERING WITH FARM OPERATIONS. ZIMBABWE ONLY HAS AN ESTIMATED TWO-MONTH SUPPLY OF WHEAT REMAINING, AND IF THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO PLANT WHEAT IN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS, ZIMBABWE WILL BE REQUIRED TO IMPORT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF ADDITIONAL TONS OF WHEAT OVER ITS NORMAL IMPORT REQUIREMENTS AT A TIME WHEN THE GOZ HAS NO HARD CURRENCY. WHEAT IS AN IRRIGATED CROP IN ZIMBABWE, AND THE MAJORITY OF COMMUNAL FARMERS DO NOT HAVE THE IRRIGATION SYSTEMS REQUIRED FOR
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GROWING WHEAT AND THUS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FILL THE VOID LEFT IF COMMERCIAL FARMERS DO NOT PLANT.

GOZ NOT PAYING FARMERS FOR FARMS ALREADY ACQUIRED

16. (C) CONTRARY TO ITS STATEMENTS IN THE PRESS, THE GOZ HAS YET TO PAY COMMERCIAL FARMERS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LAND FOR FARMS THAT HAVE BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE GOZ. A NUMBER OF FARMS HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO THE GOZ BY INDIVIDUAL FARMERS FOR RESETTLEMENT SINCE "FAST-TRACK" BEGAN LAST JUNE. THIS SITUATION HAS LEFT THESE FARMERS, WHO IN GOOD FAITH CEDED THEIR FARMS TO THE GOZ, FINANCIALLY HIGH-AND-DRY. IN ONE EXAMPLE, A CHEGUTU CATTLE RANCHER, WHO OWNED FOUR PIECES OF LAND THAT TOGETHER MADE UP HIS RANCH, OFFERED THE TWO OUTLYING PIECES OF LAND TO THE GOZ LAST JULY. HE STILL HAS NOT RECEIVED A RESPONSE FROM THE GOZ REGARDING THESE TWO PIECES OF LAND, LET ALONE PAYMENT FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LAND, WHEN ECONOFF VISITED HIM ON APRIL 10. IN ADDITION, THE MAIN PIECE OF LAND THAT IS THE HEART OF HIS RANCH, AND ON WHICH HIS HOUSE IS LOCATED, WAS INVADDED BY ALLEGED WAR VETS AND OTHER PEOPLE IN SEPTEMBER. AS A RESULT OF AGGRESSIVE POACHING BY THE

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INVADERS, HE WAS FORCED TO SELL OFF HIS CATTLE AND HAS
BEEN LEFT WITHOUT A FARMING INCOME. MANY OTHERS ARE IN
SIMILAR DIRE STRAITS.

RESETTLED ZIMBABWEANS ARE LEFT BLOWING IN THE WIND

17. (C) ON APRIL 10, ECONOFF TOURED CHEGUTU DISTRICT
SOUTHWEST OF HARARE WITH ED GUNDRY (PROTECT), THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE CFU MASHONALAND WEST - SOUTH REGION
(WITHIN WHICH CHEGUTU DISTRICT FALLS), AND BEN FREETH
(PROTECT), THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THIS SAME
DISTRICT. IN ADDITION TO VISITING TWO COMMERCIAL FARMS
WHERE TOBACCO IS THE PRINCIPAL CROP AND CATTLE RANCHING
IS A SIDE VENTURE, ECONOFF VISITED TWO FARMS IN CHEGUTU
THAT HAVE BEEN "RESETTLED" BY THE GOZ -- ONE DURING
1998, AND THE OTHER SINCE "FAST-TRACK" BEGAN IN JUNE OF
LAST YEAR. BOTH OF THESE FARMS WERE FORMERLY LARGE-
SCALE TOBACCO AND CATTLE RANCHING OPERATIONS. THE SOIL
ON THESE FARMS IS VERY SANDY, MAKING IT IDEAL FOR
GROWING TOBACCO, AND SUITABLE FOR CATTLE RANCHING GIVEN
SUFFICIENT GRAZING AREA. THIS SOIL IS NOT WELL SUITED
FOR GROWING MAIZE OR OTHER CROPS WITHOUT EXTENSIVE USE
OF FERTILIZER AS WELL AS CROP ROTATION.

18. (C) THE FARM THAT WAS RESETTLED IN JUNE LAST YEAR WAS
NEARLY DESERTED. ACCORDING TO FREETH, A YEAR EARLIER IT
HAD BEEN A THRIVING TOBACCO FARM WITH A LARGE CATTLE
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HERD. NOW VISIBLE WERE OCCASIONAL THATCH-ROOFED MUD
HUTS, THE MAJORITY OF WHICH APPEARED UNOCCUPIED.
ACCORDING TO FREETH, MOST OF THOSE RESETTLED LEFT
SHORTLY AFTER BUILDING THE HUTS WHEN THEY REALIZED HOW
POOR THE SOIL WAS FOR GROWING MAIZE AND THAT THEY WERE
NOT GOING TO GET ASSISTANCE FROM THE GOZ. IN EVIDENCE
WERE A FEW SMALL PATCHES OF STUNTED MAIZE CROPS, NONE OF
WHICH WERE GOING TO PRODUCE EDIBLE MAIZE. WEEDS WERE
GROWING IN THE FORMER TOBACCO FIELDS AND THE GRAZING
AREAS WERE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING OVERTAKEN BY SCRUB.

19. (C) THE FARM RESETTLED IN 1998 WAS marginally
DIFFERENT IN CONDITION FROM THE ONE RESETTLED AFTER
"FAST-TRACK" LAST JUNE. THIS PROPERTY HAD MORE FAMILIES
VISIBLY LIVING ON SITE IN THEIR MUD HUTS, WITH MORE
PLOTS OF STUNTED MAIZE, AS WELL AS COTTON, MOST OF WHICH
HAD NOT FLOWERED TO PRODUCE A CROP. THERE WAS ALSO THE
OCCASIONAL COW VISIBLE. THE FORMER TOBACCO FIELDS,
EXCEPT FOR THE SCATTERED PLOTS OF STUNTED MAIZE AND
COTTON, WERE COMPLETELY OVERGROWN WITH WEEDS. THERE WAS
NO INDICATION THAT THE GOZ HAD PROVIDED ANY
INFRASTRUCTURE ASSISTANCE, SUCH AS DAMS, IRRIGATION
SYSTEMS OR BUILDINGS IN THE MORE THAN TWO YEARS SINCE
RESETTLEMENT. WHILE THE GOZ MAY HAVE PROVIDED SEED
PACKS AND FERTILIZER TO THOSE RESETTLED, THIS WAS
CLEARLY NOT SUFFICIENT ASSISTANCE EVEN TO MAKE THEM
SUCCESSFUL SUBSISTENCE FARMERS.

110. (C) GUNDRY, THE CFU CHAIRMAN FOR THIS DISTRICT, SAID
THAT THIS PATTERN WAS REPLICATED ACROSS THE DISTRICT
WHERE THE GOZ HAD "RESETTLED" PEOPLE WITHOUT
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INTERNATIONAL DONOR ASSISTANCE. ON THE WAY BACK TO THE
REGIONAL CFU OFFICE, WE DROVE BY ANOTHER PIECE OF LAND
THAT WAS OVERGROWN WITH WEEDS AND BRUSH AND APPEARED
ABANDONED. GUNDRY STATED THAT THIS FARM HAD ALSO BEEN
"RESETTLED" IN 1998 BY THE GOZ. HOWEVER, A FEW MONTHS
LATER, ACCORDING TO GUNDRY, AN INDIVIDUAL WITH
CONNECTIONS TO ZANU-PF DROVE DOWN TO CHEGUTU FROM
HARARE, AND TOLD THE PEOPLE THAT THEY ALL HAD TO LEAVE

THE LAND BECAUSE IT WAS NOW HIS PROPERTY. AS A RESULT,
THE PEOPLE LEFT THE LAND, MOST LIKELY, ACCORDING TO
GUNDRY, TO HEAD BACK TO THE COMMUNAL LANDS FROM WHICH
THEY CAME.

COMMENT

11. (C) ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE GOZ IS GOING TO
CONTINUE MOVING AHEAD WITH ITS "FAST-TRACK" RESETTLEMENT
PROGRAM REGARDLESS OF THE COSTS TO ZIMBABWE IN TERMS OF
DRAMATICALLY DECREASED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND THE
COUNTRY BECOMING A PARIAH STATE FOR FOREIGN INVESTMENT.
THE FACT THAT "FAST-TRACK" IS NOT LAND REFORM BUT AN
ILL-CONCEIVED POLITICAL PATRONAGE PLAN TO INCREASE
SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT MUGABE IN THE UPCOMING

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PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS PAINFULLY OBVIOUS TO NEARLY
ALL, BUT IRRELEVANT TO THE GOZ. IN THE SHORT-RUN AND
LONG-RUN IT IS GOING TO BE THE ZIMBABWEAN PEOPLE WHO
SUFFER THE COSTS OF THIS FOLLY. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE
OF THE PEOPLE BEING "RESETTLED", WHO ARE LITERALLY
DUMPED ONTO LAND, GIVEN NO TITLE DEED TO THE LAND, AND
PROVIDED WITH NONE OF THE TRAINING, INPUTS OR
INFRASTRUCTURE THAT ARE NEEDED TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL
FARMERS. COMPOUNDING THIS PROBLEM IS THE FACT THAT
RESETTLEMENT IS ALSO BEING CARRIED OUT IN AREAS NOT
SUITABLE FOR SMALL-SCALE OR EVEN SUBSISTENCE MAIZE
FARMING. THE RESULT IS A TRAGEDY IN THE MAKING, OF A
MAGNITUDE THAT SHOULD NOT SHOCK WHEN IT FINALLY ARRIVES.
END COMMENT.

IRVING

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